

Chiesi partners with Wirral Primary Care Collaborative to advance early detection of undiagnosed COPD

- It is estimated that up to 5,000 people are living with undiagnosed COPD on the Wirral, where prevalence is more than 40% higher than the national average¹
- COPD is a leading cause of emergency hospital admissions, with an average stay of seven days²
- Chiesi UK and Ireland and the Wirral Primary Care Collaborative have launched the COMET clinic - a community-based clinic designed to accelerate COPD assessment and diagnosis, reduce system burden and improve patient outcomes

Manchester, UK - Tuesday 6th May – Chiesi UK and Ireland and Wirral Primary Care Collaborative (WPCC) have today announced the launch of COMET (COPD Targeted Management, Early Intervention and Treatment), aimed at improving early diagnosis and management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the Wirral area. The initiative aims to ease pressure on primary care and A&E services by offering early diagnosis and evidence-based interventions. Individuals identified as high risk of COPD are invited to attend a community diagnostic centre (CDC) for spirometry assessment and then a diagnostic clinic for immediate management (if diagnosed). These services will be delivered directly within the community, ensuring timely access to care.

Rachel Voller, Advanced Nurse Practitioner at Moreton & Meols PCN, said: *“An estimated two million people live with undiagnosed COPD in the UK, with symptoms like breathlessness and chronic cough often mistaken for fatigue or ageing. These delays in diagnosis lead to reduced quality of life for patients, costly emergency hospital admissions and irreversible lung damage. The lack of resources and funding across the UK means diagnostics in COPD, such as spirometry, are not always readily available in primary care. By establishing COMET, we’re equipping the NHS and supporting patients to take control of their lung health, improving early diagnosis and accelerating access to care.”*

COPD is not only debilitating for patients, but also places a growing burden on the NHS, costing an estimated £1.9 billion annually in England alone.³ The UK continues to have some of the poorest respiratory health outcomes in Europe, with higher mortality rates from COPD than in comparable countries.⁴ Despite the scale and severity of the disease, COPD can often be over-looked, meaning opportunities for early diagnosis are frequently missed.³ Many cases are identified incidentally, through initiatives such as NHS lung health checks, or during emergency admissions for other conditions, by which point irreversible lung damage may already have occurred. On the Wirral, where COPD prevalence is 2.6% compared to the national average of 1.8%, the COMET initiative aims to address this challenge by proactively identifying those at risk and providing timely access to spirometry and clinical assessment.¹

[COMET](#) enables those with symptoms and/or CT scan findings consistent with emphysema to be referred for spirometry at local Community Diagnostic Centres before inviting them to the COMET clinic for a full clinical assessment and follow-up. Designed to deliver equitable, community-based care to over 1,000 people, the programme aims to equip patients with the support they need to take control of their lung health while also helping ease the pressure on overstretched GP practices and emergency departments in the Wirral, while identifying feasible approaches that the NHS can embed in the future.

The partnership builds on insights from [FRONTIER](#), a hospital-based programme in Hull which demonstrated that targeted screening can tackle underdiagnosed COPD by improving access to testing and care. By contrast, COMET brings diagnostic assessment and management into Primary Care for patients taking part in the NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme on the Wirral, expanding early detection and intervention beyond the hospital setting.

Harriet Lewis, Senior Director of Public Affairs and Communications at Chiesi UK and Ireland, comments: *"At Chiesi, we believe early action is key to improving outcomes for people living with COPD. COMET has been designed to ensure access to diagnostic services is simple, breaking the cycle of delayed diagnosis and avoidable hospital admissions. By delivering care directly within the community, this partnership is integral to improving access to testing and care, easing NHS pressures and demonstrating how partnerships can drive scalable and sustainable change."*

About COMET

COPD Targeted Management, Early Intervention and Treatment (COMET) is a collaborative working project by Chiesi UK & Ireland and Wirral Primary Care Collaborative Limited. It aims to enable early COPD diagnosis and timely initiation of evidence-based pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions to improve outcomes for patients. As part of the project, participants of the NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme on the Wirral, who are identified as having a high risk of COPD based on symptoms and/or imaging findings are invited to attend a community diagnostic centre (CDC) for spirometry assessment and then a diagnostic clinic for immediate management. COMET will run for 18 months, evaluating the impact of delivering COPD targeted diagnosis and care in a primary care setting as a proof of concept project for potential broader adoption.

<https://www.chiesi.uk.com/comet>

About Wirral Primary Care Collaborative (WPCC)

Established in 2022, the WPCC was created by the Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and Service Delivery Units (SDUs) of the Wirral to form a single provider entity, representing all General Practices across the region.

WPCC enables General Practice to negotiate, collaborate and potentially bid for contracts on the same footing as other healthcare providers such as Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Community Trust services.

The WPCC's involvement at a system level ensures they are able to be represented and informed in terms of local priorities, and financial constraints, including the significant financial pressures, which are impacting all providers, including General Practice. The role of the WPCC is vital to ensure Primary Care is at the centre of future discussion as the NHS 10-year Plan develops and the landscape shifts to a Neighbourhood Health Service.

About Chiesi Group

Chiesi is a research-oriented international biopharmaceutical group that develops and markets innovative therapeutic solutions in respiratory health, rare diseases, and specialty care. The company's mission is to improve people's quality of life and act responsibly towards both the community and the environment.

By changing its legal status to a Benefit Corporation in Italy, the US, and France, Chiesi's commitment to create shared value for society as a whole is legally binding and central to company-wide decision-making. As a certified B Corp since 2019, we're part of a global

community of businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental impact. The company aims to reach Net-Zero greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions by 2035.

With over 85 years of experience, Chiesi is headquartered in Parma (Italy), with 31 affiliates worldwide, and counts more than 7,000 employees. The Group's research and development centre in Parma works alongside 6 other important R&D hubs in France, the US, Canada, China, the UK, and Sweden.

For further information please visit www.chiesi.uk.com.

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¹ Public Health Profiles: Public health profiles – OHID. Available at: phe.org.uk. Last Accessed April 2025.

² NHS Health Education England, Respiratory Disease: Applying All Our Health (2021). Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Respiratory%20Disease%20Report.pdf>. Last Accessed April 2025.

³ Asthma + Lung UK. Diagnosing the Problem. Right Test, Right Time. Available at <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/diagnosing-problem-right-test-right-time-report>. Last Accessed April 2025.

⁴ Asthma + Lung UK: Lung conditions kill more people in the UK than anywhere in Western Europe. <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/media/press-releases/lung-conditions-kill-more-people-uk-anywhere-western-europe>. Last Accessed April 2025.